



## **Oregon wind power expected to exceed Washington's soon**

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KENNEWICK, Wash. As wind turbines sprout like crocuses across northern Oregon and southern Washington, one conference speaker said Monday that Oregon will surpass Washington in wind generating capacity when planned projects are online.

Larry Flowers, a technical director at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Golden, Colo., led off a panel discussion, "Energy Opportunities for Rural Landowners and How to Finance Them - Large Wind: Big Money, Big Future." It was part of the Sunday through Tuesday Harvesting Clean Energy Conference at the Tri-Cities Convention Center.

The regional picture is changing, Flowers said. Another 9,361 megawatts of wind capacity is planned in Oregon and 5,831 megawatts in Washington. When those projects are completed, Oregon's capacity will be 11,119 megawatts, surpassing Washington's 7,811 megawatts.

"Wind has dropped in cost," he said, comparing it with coal and natural gas generation. "Wind's been a pretty good deal."

Looking at the national picture, Flowers said 42 percent of the nation's electrical generating capacity developed in 2008 was from the wind. That brought the total wind generating capacity to 35,000 megawatts, a growth from 2,500 megawatts in the past decade. Thirteen states had more than 1 megawatt of capacity installed by the end of 2009.

Texas is the leader with 9,410 megawatts of capacity. Iowa is second with 3,670 megawatts and California third with 2,794 megawatts.

Washington, with 1,980 megawatts, ranks fourth while Oregon at 1,758 megawatts of capacity is sixth behind Minnesota, which has 1,809 megawatts.

Still, wind power accounts for just 2 percent of the nation's overall generating capacity, Flowers said. Meanwhile, Denmark generates 20 percent of its energy via wind turbines.

Paul Weatherbee of Puget Sound Energy described the private utility's Lower Snake River Wind Energy Project in southeast Washington. It plans 792 wind turbines in Columbia and Garfield counties, south of the Snake River.

Phase I will be erected this year, he said, and the utility should be producing wind power from the project next year.

Weatherbee said financing was provided by federal stimulus funds and tax credits.

Walter Morgan, Garfield County public works director, described how the county's open-door approach helped to gain the public's confidence in the rural county. Garfield County has 2,400 inhabitants, 1,500 of whom live in Pomeroy, the county seat.

Morgan said the wind turbine project sailed through without a hitch because county officials had early and continuous contact with tribal, local, state and federal agencies, plus concerned environmental groups.

Graham Noyes, a Seattle attorney who was involved in planning the Lower Snake River project, said the effort paid off. He related the comments of one elderly man who spoke at one of the public hearings.

"I've been waiting 50 years for something like this to come to Garfield County," Noyes quoted the man as saying. "Our ship's come in. Don't remove the dock."